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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

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SESSION OF THE 21ST LEGISLATURE OF
THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA ON
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1989

THE HONOURABLE W. HELEN HUNLEY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly,

I have the honour to welcome you to the Fourth Session of the Twenty-first Legislature of the Province of Alberta.

As you begin your deliberations and decisions, Albertans are experiencing a surge of confidence and investment flowing throughout our Province. The outlook for jobs and business growth in communities all across Alberta is strong and dynamic.

The severe downturn which so sorely tested us during the middle years of the decade is over. Albertans from every walk of life can now find assurance and confidence in the prospects of the most robust economy in Canada.

During 1988, Alberta's economy grew more vigorously than any other Province. Over 40,000 new jobs were created and we are experiencing the highest level of employment in our history. Wages and salaries also rose, while price increases were the lowest in Canada.

Our agricultural industry, which is so vital to the villages, towns and cities of Alberta, enjoyed a comeback after several years of depressed prices and damaging weather conditions. Our energy industry has committed to long-term development and is building major new pipeline systems to meet the strong demand for our oil and natural gas. Major new petrochemical plants are also being planned. My government has been successful in obtaining large and essential non-conventional energy projects for our Province.

The heavy oil up-grader at **Lloydminster** is now under construction. Our oil sands are again being developed with a huge new plant proceeding at **Fort McMurray.**

In our important tourism industry and the exciting sector of advanced technology, the solid building blocks set by my government have stimulated new expansion and record growth.

Most remarkable of all is the explosion of investment in the forestry industry. More than 15 major developments with a value of over $3.5 billion have been announced during recent months. Our vast forest resources have finally become a powerful influence in our new diversified economy.

My government is building this economy in partnership with Albertans and the outlook for the next decade is full of promise.

But our partnership must be more than just economic. My government believes that social and economic development are inseparable. We share a trust with Albertans to care for those with special needs, to provide a level and quality of essential services that recognizes the priorities of all Albertans and reaches out to help them.

My government considers the education and training of our young people as our most important responsibility. A record level of expenditures will meet this commitment.

In an exciting new initiative, my government will take measures to support the family — that cornerstone of our society where we learn our values, nurture our sense of self and develop the skills with which we live our lives. This is a social contract with Albertans — with families, churches, schools, care givers and communities.

The values upon which our forefathers built this Province will be emphasized — love of family, love of home, love of faith and community, and love for Alberta.

A Breakthrough in Diversification

Future generations will look at the past few years of Alberta's economic history and will recognize the importance of our accomplishments. New industries have emerged and are now in the mainstream of everyday business life. New jobs are being created in tourism, technology, transportation, business, personal and community services.

A broader economy means greater stability in employment levels and more varied educational and career opportunities. It means Alberta families staying together and our young people building their future in their own communities.

My government has continued to promote its blueprint for a more diverse economy in the areas of petrochemicals, forestry, tourism and advanced technology. We are seeing exciting results.

Forestry Is A Success Story

Diversification through forestry has been achieved. Three years ago my government committed to develop the potential of our renewable forest resources. A Department of Forestry, Lands & Wildlife was created to achieve this goal. Since then, investments totalling $3.5 billion have been announced which will generate over 12,000 jobs.

New or expanded sawmills are now operating or proposed for **Manning, Hinton, Grande Prairie, Edson, Sundre, Rocky Mountain House** and **Lac La Biche.** High value-added products such as fibre board and oriented strand board are being produced at **Blue Ridge, Edson** and **Drayton Valley.**

Following the recent start-up of the Millar Western pulp mill at **Whitecourt**, planning is proceeding for new pulp mills near **Grande Prairie, Athabasca** and **Slave Lake.** The Daishowa pulp mill is under construction at **Peace River,** and Weldwood's pulp mill at **Hinton** will double its production when the expanded facilities start up next year. Alberta's first newsprint mill is under construction near **Whitecourt** and Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries is developing the world's largest pulp and paper complex near **Athabasca.**

These pulp mills have been strategically located to make full use of chips and previously unusable wood from lumber mills, enhancing profitability and maximizing our wood resource.

Besides those employed directly in timber harvesting and lumber processing, these projects require truckers, engineers, welders and suppliers of office goods, equipment, manufacturing supplies and catering. Most of these services will be supplied by newly vibrant communities stretched across the northern areas of Alberta and the City of **Edmonton.** The new buildings, roads, railway and utilities required for forestry development will also generate construction activity.

These widespread developments are possible because of my government's progressive forest management policies and programs which require perpetual renewal of the forest. The Pine Ridge nursery at **Smoky Lake** produced enough new seedlings last year to replant 30,000 acres. My government is now considering the most effective way to increase our tree nursery capacity to enable prompt reforestation. Research will continue to develop new products and processes and faster growing and healthier trees.

Reaching the Tourism Goal Together

My government will continue to stimulate growth in tourism — Alberta's third largest industry. Worth $2.5 billion annually, our goal is to create a $10 billion industry by the year 2000. We will work in partnership with communities, the private sector and tourism zones to reach this goal.

The strategy for developing this industry includes significant financial support for tourism networks at the community level, regional and provincial attractions, infrastructure, quality tourism and hospitality services, and aggressive marketing.

Successful regional tourism attractions such as Head-Smashed-in-Buffalo-Jump in southern Alberta, the Tyrell Museum of Paleontology at **Drumheller,** Spruce Meadows near **Calgary** and Fort Edmonton in northern Alberta bring hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Alberta will develop more high-calibre projects, and the potential is especially strong in our magnificent north.

My government will be working with the private sector to build Family Vacation Destination Resorts close to major attractions. Through joint efforts, these multi-featured resorts will encourage both domestic and international visitors to stay longer in our Province.

Community tourism planning is at an all time high. Communities throughout Alberta are jointly developing plans and projects with the private sector. The $30 million Community Tourism Action Program of my government has built on the recognition and awareness gained through the Olympic Winter Games, while the $20 million Team Tourism Program is marketing Alberta's tourism assets in partnership with our private sector.

Through the Municipal Recreation/Tourism Areas Program, municipalities and volunteer organizations have been able to develop recreation facilities, provide individual and family recreational opportunities and enhance the quality of life in rural areas. My government will provide an additional $2.3 million to complete at least 23 new projects this year.

Alberta's vibrant arts community is important to Albertans and visitors. There are more than two million tickets sold each year to presentations of Alberta's performing arts — dance, drama, visual arts and music of many kinds. The non-profit societies that present these events depend on the effort and time of thousands of volunteers, as well as the professionals involved in the productions.

Performing arts enrich all of us. Initiatives will be announced, using lottery revenues, to provide more financial security for our professional performing arts organizations. My government will also propose measures to make our performing arts groups self sustaining.

Albertans have an outstanding record of volunteerism. Two initiatives will recognize the contributions of our many volunteers. April 9 - 15, will be declared **Alberta Volunteer Week** and a conference with the theme **Alberta's Volunteers — A Foundation to Build On** will be held in **Edmonton** in June.

The **Alberta Multicultural Commission,** has completed a series of public meetings seeking Albertans advice on the future direction of multiculturalism in our Province. Following the Commission's report, my government will strengthen its commitment to multiculturalism.

Keeping the Technological Advantage

My government is stimulating economic growth and diversification through advanced technologies. These technologies are essential to the productivity and competitive leadership of our primary industries. They have created business and employment opportunities in new sectors, products and services. Last year support for science and technology exceeded $240 million, a greater amount than provided by any other province.

More than 40,000 persons are employed by companies in microelectronics, telecommunications, biotechnology, computing and software, lasers and new materials. Many regions of the world have purchased specialty products and expertise from these companies.

The Alberta Research Council, through the very successful Joint Venture Program, shares development costs with companies undertaking major new initiatives. For example, a **Calgary** manufacturer of large truck springs recently installed Alberta's first large industrial robot under this program.

A recently announced Medical Innovations Program will stimulate the commercialization of medical products and pharmaceuticals. It will build on the work of 145 senior scientists and 300 researchers in training who are funded by the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research.

In the last few years especially, many Alberta companies have created new and interesting employment prospects in new technologies. They offer exciting opportunities for future generations. My government will continue to support and encourage these new entrepreneurs and talented researchers and scientists.

Attracting New Petrochemical Investment

Alberta's petrochemical industry is widely recognized as a major achievement in upgrading resources and economic diversification. In total, the petrochemical industry and related facilities represent a $6 billion investment, employing well over 6,000 Albertans, and generating annual sales of approximately $3.5 billion.

In October, my government announced a new ethane policy. The policy recognizes the interests of both the petrochemical and the oil and gas industries. The new policy will encourage more development in the ethylene-based sector and will also assure a supply of liquids for enhanced oil recovery. In 1989, the industry is planning investments which could effectively double Alberta's ethylene capacity and lead to further by-products.

New investment activity in the downstream plastics processing industry has resulted in a much larger and diverse range of plastic products manufactured in Alberta. Over 25 new projects or expansions are planned for 1989, totalling $95 million of new investment.

Diversification is always a challenge, but for Alberta it has become a reality.

Optimism Returns to Agriculture

Agriculture is the foundation of our Province and the number one economic priority of my government.

Alberta draws great strength from the many rural communities on which the Province was founded and from the dynamic agricultural industry that powers these communities. My government continues its commitment to agriculture and the family farm by strengthening existing programs and by proposing new initiatives during this session.

The farm sector outlook has improved dramatically over the last twelve months. Farm income is on the upswing. Current projections for 1989 Alberta farm cash receipts are up about 13 percent over a year ago. Prices have rebounded significantly for cereal crops, canola prices are above year-ago levels, and the long-term outlook appears favourable. The beef industry has experienced several years of good returns and appears confident. Pork prices are expected to improve significantly over the balance of 1989.

Agriculture in Alberta is poised to take advantage of the more secure market now offered by the **Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement**. To increase exports to the United States, a new Market Enhancement Program has been developed.

Alberta is also determined to open more doors in the growing Asia-Pacific Rim marketplace for our agricultural products. Agricultural exports range from genetics to processed food products. The potential is tremendous. To build on the success already achieved, market missions and product promotions will be continued.

A public review of the Alberta Agricultural Development Corporation has resulted in improvements in the delivery and effectiveness of provincial farm credit programs. In particular, the Beginning Farmer Program will be more flexible and responsive.

We continue our commitment to reduce farm input costs. Both the Farm Fertilizer Protection Plan and the Farm Fuel Distribution Allowance will be continued. The well-received Crow Benefit Offset Program has also been extended. In addition, a new honey stabilization plan is added to those for red meats, edible beans, and sugar beets.

A new field crop development program will center on applied research, forage variety testing, crop diversification and improving crop production systems.

A new program will assist the greenhouse industry to improve productivity and efficiency, to conserve energy and diversify production.

The Province is participating in a national review of crop insurance. This review will produce major improvements for the 1990 crop year. Improvements for 1989 include changing the risk area boundaries, moving to individual coverage, and developing a better forage program.

The proper conservation of soil resources is a serious concern. In cooperation with federal and municipal levels of government, new initiatives will improve the conservation of agricultural land resources. A comprehensive, multi-million dollar approach will include programs to transfer soil conservation technology to Alberta farmers and establish field shelterbelts.

My government will strengthen its partnership with rural communities through a major increase in capital grants to Agricultural Societies and additional funding to local Agricultural Service Boards.

The Remote Area Heating Allowance Program, the Primary Agricultural Producers Rebate Program and the Farm Water Grant Program have been continued.

In 1989, party line telephone service will be converted to individual line service for almost 30,000 more subscribers. The ability to use computer links, telephone answering machines and similar important services help our farmers and ranchers to improve their operating efficiencies. The major five-year program to bring individual line service to rural subscribers will have reached about 60,000 families, homes and businesses by the end of this year.

My government is deeply committed to maintaining the well-being of rural Alberta.

Energy Is Building Again

1988 was a year of accomplishment. The **Lloydminster** Bi-Provincial Upgrader and the OSLO oil sands project in **Fort McMurray** were announced after successful negotiations between my government, industry, and other governments. The **Lloydminster** project, an investment of $1.3 billion, will have the capacity to convert Alberta and Saskatchewan heavy oil and bitumen into 46,000 barrels per day of synthetic crude oil. It underscores my government's resolve to upgrade our resources here, where they are produced, and to provide jobs and opportunities for Albertans.

The OSLO project, our first new oil sand plant since 1975, will result in an investment of $4 billion and will produce 77,000 barrels per day of synthetic crude oil. The oil sands and upgrader projects will contribute to Canada's energy security and create thousands of person-years of employment during design and construction. They will also stimulate local manufacturing and supply industries and secure permanent jobs for a substantial work force when they become operational.

In 1988, Syncrude completed its $685 million capacity addition. Production will increase to about 160,000 barrels per day. In 1989, Syncrude and Suncor will account for approximately 15 percent of Alberta's production of crude oil.

The **Caroline** natural gas field is the largest to be discovered in twenty years. It increases the Province's gas liquids reserves by 10 percent and sulphur reserves by 25 percent.

Last year, gas exports increased by 30 percent to record levels on top of a similar increase in 1987. The growth in demand for exports of oil and gas will lead to the design and construction of new pipelines. My government will work with industry to assess alternative transportation projects to take maximum advantage of these opportunities.

Alberta is Canada's principal producer and consumer of coal. The prospects for the coal industry are improving after several years of difficulty. My government continues to find ways to improve the end-use quality of Alberta coals and to reduce mine site and transportation costs. This year it will spend over $8 million on projects to enhance the competitiveness of western Canadian coal in all markets.

Our strong energy industry provides employment and investment opportunities all across our Province strengthening our families and communities.

A Buoyant Business Outlook

Alberta strengthened its economic base in 1988. Manufacturing shipments were up 11 percent over the previous year, merchandise exports were up more than 10 percent, and over 14,000 new businesses were incorporated. Total investment in the province was up 15 percent over the previous year with the manufacturing sector, spurred by forestry activity, more than doubling.

Much of the vitality, ingenuity and renewal of our economy springs from its small businesses. The Alberta government will continue to support small business investment in the province. The Small Business Equity Corporations Program has been credited with placing equity investments in 430 small businesses since 1984. It will be revised to ensure that incentives are available to more investors to encourage equity capital for investment in our small businesses.

A new seed capital division will be established within the Alberta Opportunity Company. This is intended to meet the high demand by entrepreneurs for capital during start-up and the early stages of small businesses.

Legislation will be placed before this Assembly to improve the regulation of credit unions and trust and loan companies. Legislation will also be presented to provide new rules for disclosure and to ensure fair dealing in the financial market place in keeping with the report **A Blueprint for Fairness**.

The **Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement** provides a powerful opportunity for Alberta businesses. My government has already introduced a number of measures designed to take advantage of new trade opportunities. The Lets Talk Trade Program will enhance business awareness of new trade opportunities, provide information to encourage the private sector to take advantage of those opportunities, and introduce new exporters to the United States market. Also, financial assistance will be provided to small communities to help them with their plans and ideas for economic development.

The multicultural nature of Alberta provides economic strength. My government continues to seek the assistance of our citizens with roots in other lands to promote and encourage trade, investment and tourism. The government will host ALTATRADE '89 in **Calgary** during March 1989, to build business bridges to the home countries of our new entrepreneurs.

The Northern Alberta Development Council will be continuing its public participation role during 1989-90 with particular emphasis on infrastructure needs as a result of growth and diversification. Two workshops are planned on adult literacy aimed at assuring that local residents have first chance at new jobs in forestry developments.

A stable labour relations climate is essential for Alberta to fully realize its economic growth potential. My government is encouraged by signs which suggest the collective bargaining process in Alberta is operating effectively. In 1988, over 98 percent of all collective agreement settlements were negotiated without work stoppages.

Alberta is favoured with a work force of talented, well-educated and trained men and women motivated by a work ethic second to none. They hold the key to ensuring our future growth and prosperity as a Province.

My government's generous support for training and career counselling programs will be maintained. It is important to ensure that Albertans are well-equipped with the necessary experience and skills. The breakthrough in diversifying our economy, and new trade potential, place us on the threshold of an era of unprecedented new employment opportunities.

Strengthening Alberta Families

My government believes that strong families are the heart of society. Through the family, society renews itself — a renewal nurtured by the love, care and support of family members: children, adolescents, adults and seniors.

The responsibility for the well-being and stability of the family is vested in the partnership of individuals, families, communities and governments. The reality today is that family structures take many diverse forms. My government is committed to assuring that families remain strong and that those in crisis receive the support of a caring society.

A Battle We Must Win

Substance abuse is a continuing and serious threat to family life and the well being of our young people. It strikes when they are most vulnerable to peer pressure and the influence of the criminal element. The scourge of drug and substance abuse must be stopped.

A major new initiative is needed. My government will ask the Legislature to fund a $200 million endowment for the **Alberta Family Life and Drug Abuse Foundation**. This Foundation will lead the fight and aggressively address the prevention, research and treatment of drug and other addictions. The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund was established to help build a strong future. It will be used in a new way for a special investment in the future of our youth. My government seeks the assistance, support and strength of all Albertans to win this battle.

As a further commitment to families my government will create **The Premiers Council in Support of Alberta Families**. The Council will seek advice from all Albertans. People will be asked to help with solutions as a result of their knowledge and experiences. The Council will help plan for the first **Lieutenant Governor's Conference on Alberta Families** to be held this year.

My government will expand in-home support services for families which are at serious risk to avoid, where possible, the need to take children into government care. As well, additional treatment services will be provided for families and children who suffer from emotional and mental health problems.

My government also remains keenly aware of the devastating effects of family violence. New initiatives to combat this threat will be proposed and additional support will be provided to our network of family shelters.

The stability of many single parent families, especially those cared for by divorced mothers, will be enhanced by additional resources for the Alberta Maintenance Enforcement Program. This program assists in the effective recovery of maintenance orders to support over 30,000 children.

To make child day care accessible and affordable to those who require it, my government provides subsidies to over 13,000 children of lower-income families who attend day care centres or family day homes. These day care subsidy levels will be increased in 1989.

To ensure quality child care, my government will introduce training requirements for all staff working in day care centres. These requirements will be phased in over a three year period and include basic training in early childhood development.

All reasonable child care choices will be supported by my government. We will ensure fairness for families who care for their children in their own homes. Negotiations with the federal government on a national child care program will reflect this commitment.

To ensure that Alberta families have safe, convenient facilities in their own communities where parents, and their children, can use their leisure time in a healthy and productive way, the $100 million Community Facility Enhancement Program was announced a few months ago.

A new February holiday will be proposed. My government will introduce legislation to designate the third Monday of February as **Alberta's Family Day** — an annual statutory holiday highlighting a **Family Week** that will provide an opportunity to celebrate the strength and vitality of families.

Expanding Our Educational Priority

My government continues to place its highest priority on education. Education is the foundation for a successful future for our youth. My government has ensured that our students have the opportunity to acquire the skills, the confidence and the attitudes to succeed. For instance, the increase in operating grants for education exceeds those for other sectors.

My government will dramatically expand exciting distance education programs in the 1989 school year. Using new technology, distance education can bring students in rural areas with sparse populations such as **Kinuso, Rocky Lane, Endiang, Rosemary, Hussar, Carbon** and **Coalhurst**, more courses to ensure a comprehensive and affordable high school education. Distance education delivers my government's promise of educational equity to families in all communities.

My government's commitment to enhanced equity funding will be implemented in 1989. Equal access to education for all Albertans is a priority and this grant will assist school boards with a small tax base or in sparsely populated areas.

My government will provide additional support to schools with unique needs in the inner core of **Edmonton** and **Calgary**. Students and families associated with these schools face major challenges, from learning problems to basic nutrition and health care. My government's goal is to deliver the support needed by these children and their families so that they will be better able to learn. Community schools will also receive 100 percent funding from my government.

In post-secondary education, opportunities will be expanded in several key areas. First, and most importantly, business education is being expanded in an unprecedented way. Alberta's stronger diversified economy will require many more people with business and entrepreneurial skills. More student spaces will therefore be provided at the universities in **Edmonton, Calgary** and **Lethbridge** and additional facilities to accommodate business education will be developed at the universities of **Calgary** and **Lethbridge**.

In response to the Interim Report of the **Premier's Commission on Health Care** significant changes will occur in nursing education. University transfer programs are also being expanded at Mount Royal College in **Calgary, Red Deer** Community College and at Grant MacEwan College in **Edmonton**.

Alberta is fortunate to have other post-secondary facilities offering their services to Albertans. The private colleges in **Edmonton, Camrose** and **Lacombe** will receive additional support. Also, those rural-based voluntary associations that bring post-secondary courses into rural communities will receive more funding. They are the **Big Country, Chinook, North Peace, Pembina** and **Yellowhead** associations.

The incredible success of the first two matching endowment funds raised over $385 million in enrichment funding for Alberta's post-secondary institutions. Building on that unique experience, my government will introduce a third matching Endowment Fund, effective April 1, 1989. The new fund will provide an additional $80 million to match, on a one-for-one basis, dollars donated by individuals or corporations.

A substantial program of capital development, designed to enlarge and enhance the post-secondary system, will be presented to this Assembly. Capital development projects will include student housing at the University of Lethbridge, a new Faculty of Extension Building at the University of Alberta and a new Professional Building at the University of Calgary. The **Brooks** campus for Medicine Hat College will proceed, as well as planning for Phase II of the Medicine Hat Campus. Funds will be provided for the completion of Corbett Hall at the University of Alberta, Phase II of Grande Prairie College, the new Grant MacEwan College, the **Lloydminster** campus for Lakeland College, a new Physical Education Building for Lethbridge Community College, a new Plant Sciences Building for Olds College and a Cultural Centre for Keyano College at **Fort McMurray**.

Health Services For Prevention and Treatment

Access to high quality health services for Albertans is a continuing priority of my government.

During this Session, the **Department of Health Act** will be presented to the Legislature. It will emphasize the effective delivery of services for both prevention and treatment. It will accent the important relationship between services delivered through the community and services through hospitals. Both mental and physical health services will be included in the Act.

The **Premier's Commission on Future Health Care for Albertans** has completed recommendations concerning the unique role of nurses. As part of a $30 million commitment, my government will recommend $7.5 million in funding for job enhancement and other initiatives.

The Premier's Commission is continuing its comprehensive review of health services for Albertans and will report to the government by December.

My government is very concerned that breast cancer is the single largest cause of death in women aged 40 to 59 years. During this Session, therefore, funding will be recommended to initiate a breast screening program for early detection of cancer.

The **Long Term Care Committee** has made recommendations to offer more effective choices to meet the health needs of Albertans requiring long-term care. Our system contains 13,500 long-term care beds and 1,500 more will be added in the coming year.

More funding will also be directed to nursing homes for additional services to patients who require more care.

Home care enables senior citizens to remain independent and is therefore a very high priority of my government. We will ask the Assembly to significantly increase funding above the $38 million spent last year. My government believes that families are strengthened when they can choose between services in their homes or in institutions.

These and other new initiatives, which will be presented to the Legislature, emphasize the priority my government places on maintaining and improving services to our seniors who built Alberta and who continue to make a major contribution to our Province.

Leading in Environmental Protection

My government has undertaken to preserve the quality of Alberta's natural gifts for future generations. It requires that environmental impact must be taken into account in every decision to drill a well, cut a tree, destroy waste or build a dam.

Alberta was the first government in Canada to establish a Department of Environment in 1971. Ensuring that we always have clean air, clean water and clean land is a commitment of my government.

The **Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre** at **Swan Hills** is a world leader in the field of hazardous waste disposal. It is the first fully integrated hazardous waste treatment plant in North America. My government will continue to maintain this leadership position by cooperating to establish a **Centre of Expertise in Hazardous Waste Management**. This Centre will assist private entrepreneurs to export Alberta expertise and technology to the world.

Alberta's new pulp mill environment standards take into account the latest technology and are receiving international recognition. The assessment process for these mills will assure the opportunity for those interested to contribute publicly on each development proposal.

Recycling initiatives to assist in managing Alberta's garbage; enhancements of the beverage container system; the Pesticide Container Program; an inventory and assessment of underground fuel storage tanks; and the clean-up of abandoned landfill sites, are some of the important environmental programs my government has initiated. Sulphur recovery requirements recently introduced will reduce emissions by as much as five times for large gas plants.

The Land Reclamation Program funded by the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund to reclaim landfill sites and abandoned gravel pits will be extended for an additional five years.

Albertans will also be involved in my government's goal of providing sound management of water, a crucial resource. The Athabasca River Basin planning process will be the subject of public consultation this spring. Water management projects such as **Little Bow, Willow Creek** and **Milk River** will include the multi-purpose needs of recreation, fish and wildlife, flood and erosion control, and municipal water users as well as our vital agricultural sector.

Sustainable economic development in harmony with our environment requires that we strengthen our ability to consolidate the views of all sectors. Therefore, my government will establish a multi-sectoral **Environmental Round Table**. The Round Table will build consensus and develop proposals to coordinate and integrate environmental and economic decisions.

Meeting Special Needs

My government continues its commitment to those with special needs so that they have sufficient resources to live with dignity and independence.

During 1988, my government established the **Committee to Review Services to the Mentally Handicapped**. This Committee has held forums across the Province to obtain views respecting services to the mentally handicapped. As a result of the Committee's work, recommendations will be made to improve the range of services available to assist our mentally handicapped citizens to meet their aspirations.

Due to recent advances in medical technology, many more individuals are now surviving their injuries. My government will introduce a community-based pilot program to assist in the long-term rehabilitation of individuals who have suffered serious head injuries so that they may fulfill their potential as contributing and productive members of society.

Affordable and appropriate housing for Albertans with special needs continues to be a priority. Under an enhanced Home Adaptation Program, more Albertans with mobility handicaps will receive increased benefits for home improvements. Income limits will be raised to enable more disabled Albertans to make modifications so they can remain in their own homes with their families.

My government will continue to support the development of non-profit housing that will enable people with special needs to remain with their families. Housing needs for residents of the inner city communities will also be addressed through subsidized housing projects.

My government strongly supports the aspirations and choices of Alberta women. We will address the key issues brought forward through the **Alberta Advisory Council on Womens' Issues**. We will strengthen strategies that maintain strong families; develop women's education, training and employment choices; encourage women's involvement in public life; and address the needs Alberta women have identified in health and social services programs. My government will establish a mechanism to review pension benefits for women age 55 and over and to evaluate the feasibility of homemaker pensions. Within the public service, job sharing and management development programs will be emphasized.

Albertans are a fair-minded and caring people. Our history as a province reveals a strong tradition of support for individual rights and freedoms. In keeping with this tradition, my government will introduce amendments to the **Individual's Rights Protection Act** to prohibit discrimination based on mental disability and will extend protection against sexual harassment to all employees including domestic employees and live-in farm workers.

In Partnership with Communities

Partnerships with Alberta's municipalities are a priority of my government. New multi-year partnership programs with cities, towns, villages, summer villages and rural municipalities will begin this year. An important element of these enhanced programs are special incentives to create safe streets in every Alberta community — safe streets for children, seniors and the general public.

As part of its Alberta Cities Transportation Partnership Program, my government will provide funds to Alberta cities for capital projects to reduce safety concerns. Eligible projects will include improved street lighting, pedestrian and traffic signals, pedestrian overpasses and other measures to enhance the safety of our citizens.

My government has also vigorously enforced strong new measures adopted in 1988 to curb drinking drivers. Any person who drives while impaired is a hazard to himself and a danger to others. My government is determined to keep our roads and highways safe.

My government will continue construction on a twinned highway corridor to the United States border in order to encourage the flow of goods and visitors. Combined with a regulatory arrangement favourable to a competitive trucking industry, this highway will help businesses take full advantage of free trade and tourism opportunities.

Secondary roads are a critical link in the transportation network which delivers Alberta's farm, forest and manufactured products to the world on a competitive footing. These roads also provide essential access for the families and businesses in many communities. My government is committed to this important and expanding system.

To date, the Urban Parks Program has developed parks in seven Alberta cities. The exceptional recreational opportunities and the natural beauty of these parks are appreciated. Expansion of the program will provide nine additional urban parks as well as increase funds for the parks in **Edmonton** and **Calgary**.

Working With Native Peoples

My government remains committed to fulfilling its obligations under the 1930 Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, and to assisting the federal government in settling outstanding treaty land entitlements. To this end, Alberta negotiators have worked cooperatively and constructively with negotiators for both the federal government and various Indian bands in tripartite discussions. This had led to the successful conclusion of the **Fort Chipewyan Cree Band** settlement, an agreement-in-principle on land claims with the **Whitefish Lake Band** and good progress with the **Sturgeon Lake Band**.

Consistent with this approach to fair negotiations, the initiatives undertaken by our Premier in October, 1988 were a major breakthrough in working towards a settlement with the **Lubicon Lake Indian Band**. The groundwork has been laid for discussions between the Province, the federal government and the band.

The 1987 framework agreement between my government and the Metis Association of Alberta, calling for joint planning and action in areas of concern to the Metis people, has been ratified. To date, cooperative programs have been established in the areas of education, social services, employment and training, business development, municipal services and forests and wildlife.

As well, my government is demonstrating innovative leadership with the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlement Associations in the development and implementation of a special form of self government for Alberta's Metis settlements. Legislation will be passed as early as possible to accommodate the transfer and entrenchment in the Canadian Constitution of the ownership of land to the Metis settlements.

Improved business and employment opportunities to assist Native peoples in participating in oilsands development in northeastern Alberta have been earmarked as a priority. My government is an equal partner with the Government of Canada, Syncrude Canada Ltd., and the Athabasca Native Development Corporation in a five-year agreement which will result in the growth of local Native businesses, and will provide educational and training programs to help Native residents qualify for employment.

Beyond Our Borders — Strong Leadership

Senate Reform is essential to a better, fairer Canada. Albertans strongly support a **Triple E Senate** — one that is elected, and effective, with equal provincial representation. My government has been the leading advocate of the concept and has consistently displayed national leadership to ensure a stronger voice for Alberta and all Canadians within the federal parliamentary system.

In August, 1988, the Annual Premiers' Conference endorsed Alberta's proposal for the **Alberta Task Force on Senate Reform** to consult with other governments. Since then, the Task Force members have travelled from coast to coast — meeting with both provincial and federal elected officials and interested groups and organizations. My government is determined to achieve meaningful constitutional reform of the Upper House. It will continue to lead intergovernmental discussions and to aggressively promote the merits of the **Triple E Senate** to all Canadians.

In keeping with its commitment to an elected Senate, my government intends to introduce legislation to provide a democratic foundation for the Senate selection procedure. The proposed legislation will enable Albertans to elect people for appointment to the Senate until comprehensive reform is achieved.

This historic legislation would, for the first time, ensure that future Senators from Alberta have received the popular support and confidence of the people.

Alberta, and most of our country, is experiencing solid economic growth. My government believes that the current national high interest rate policy will slow our growth. Such a policy will harm our farmers, ranchers, small businesses, homeowners and labor force. My government will strive for low interest rates to enable Alberta's economy to continue to strengthen.

Alberta is a unique Province. We do not have a provincial sales tax and my government opposes a national sales tax. My government will be a strong voice for Albertans against the imposition of such a tax.

Members of the Legislative Assembly:

In due course, you will be presented with the budget estimates. You will be asked to authorize the necessary funds for operating services and expenditures and to endorse a program of capital financing for the Government of Alberta. You represent a beautiful Province of strength, hope and promise.

I leave you now to the business of the Session, with full confidence that, as elected representatives, your debates and your votes will reflect your responsibilities to all Albertans.

I pray for your wisdom and your strength.